

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Review of Vacuum Breakdown and Discharge Studies	5
2.1 The Electrode Surface in a Vacuum Discharge	5
2.1.1 Preparation of Electrodes	5
2.1.2 Determination of Micropoint Parameters	7
2.1.3 Effect of Emission from Non-metallic Inclusions	9
2.2 Vacuum Insulation, Properties and Breakdown	11
2.2.1 Prebreakdown Phenomena	12
2.2.2 Microdischarges	13
2.2.3 The Breakdown Voltage	14
2.3 Kinetics of Vacuum Electrical Breakdown	15
2.3.1 Characteristic Times of Breakdown	15
2.3.2 Role of Electrodes in the Development of Breakdown	18
2.3.3 X-Ray Pulse at Breakdown	19
2.4 Field Electron Emission to Vacuum Breakdown Transition	21
2.5 Hypotheses on Vacuum Breakdown Initiation	23
2.5.1 Physical Processes Leading to Vacuum Breakdown	21
2.5.2 Cathode-Initiated Breakdown	24
2.5.3 Anode-Initiated Breakdown	26
2.5.4 Comparison between Cathode and Anode Mechanisms for Breakdown Initiation	27
2.5.5 Microparticle-Initiated Breakdown	31
2.6 Spark Stage of Vacuum Breakdown	33
2.7 The Discharge Arc Stage. The Cathode Spot	35
2.7.1 Physical Properties of the Cathode Spot	36
2.7.2 Cathode-Spot Models	40
3. Experimental Equipment and Techniques	43
3.1 Electrical Measurement Techniques	43
3.1.1 High-Voltage, Nanosecond Pulse Generators	44
3.1.2 Current and Voltage Pulse Recording	46

3.2	Diagnostics of the Radiation that Accompanies Breakdown	47
3.2.1	Electro-optical Recording of the Light Emission . . .	48
3.2.2	Photoelectrical Recording of the Light Emission . . .	50
3.2.3	Spectral Investigation of the Discharge Plasma Radiation	52
3.2.4	X-Radiation Recording	53
3.3	Vacuum Equipment	54
3.4	Preparation and Examination of Electrode Surfaces	55
4.	Pulsed Nanosecond Breakdown of Vacuum Gaps	58
4.1	Time Characteristics of the Pulsed Vacuum Breakdown . . .	58
4.1.1	The Influence of Electrode Conditioning	60
4.1.2	The Influence of the Vacuum	60
4.2	Study of Light Emission at Pulsed Breakdown	62
4.2.1	Single-Shot Investigations	62
4.2.2	The Continuous-Operation Regime	64
4.2.3	Comparison with Other Data	66
4.3	Electrode Erosion Studies	70
4.3.1	Cathode Erosion	70
4.3.2	The Tracer Method	70
4.3.3	Anode Erosion	71
4.4	Nature of the Discharge Current at Breakdown	72
4.5	Mechanism of Pulsed Breakdown of Vacuum Gaps	75
4.5.1	The Role of the Cathode	75
4.5.2	The Cathode Plasma and the Electron Current	76
4.5.3	Anode Phenomena	77
5.	Cathode Processes in a Pulsed Vacuum Discharge	79
5.1	EEE Initiation by High-Density FEE Current	79
5.1.1	Experimental Conditions	80
5.1.2	Description of EEE Current	82
5.1.3	The Point Explosion Delay Time	84
5.1.4	Calculation of the Emitter Heating	85
5.1.5	The Vacuum Discharge Delay Time	87
5.2	Erosion of Point Cathodes	89
5.2.1	The Fast Current Rise	89
5.2.2	The Slow Current Rise	92
5.2.3	The Point Erosion Rate	93
5.2.4	Erosion Due to Joule Heating	93
5.2.5	Comparison with Experiment	96
5.3	EEE Current Density Measurements	96
5.3.1	Current Density of a Point Cathode	96
5.3.2	Current Density from a Massive Cathode	97

5.3.3	Measurements Based on Erosion	99
5.3.4	Experimental Data	102
5.4	Microstructure of the Cathode Surface	104
5.4.1	Erosion Traces in SEM	104
5.4.2	The Field Enhancement Factor	107
5.5	The Contribution of Droplet Ejection to Cathode Erosion	110
5.6	Pressure in the Emission Zone	113
5.7	Formation of Cathode Microstructure	114
6.	Cathode Flare Plasma	118
6.1	Velocity of CF Plasma Expansion	118
6.1.1	The Grounded Grid and Collector Method	119
6.1.2	The Photoelectric Method	120
6.1.3	The Transverse Magnetic Field Method	120
6.1.4	The Method of the Anode Erosion Mark	121
6.2	CF Plasma Parameters	121
6.2.1	CF Plasma Density	121
6.2.2	CF Plasma Composition and Temperature	124
6.3	EEE Current Effect on the Dynamics of the Plasma Light Emission	126
6.4	A Model for CF Plasma Expansion	128
6.4.1	The Adiabatic Model	128
6.4.2	MHD Calculation	130
6.4.3	The Model of an Ideal Plasma	132
7.	Current Passage in the Spark Stage of Breakdown	136
7.1	Electron Emission from CF Plasma into Vacuum	137
7.2	Electron Emission from CF Plasma, Experimental Studies	139
7.3	Current-Voltage Characteristics of a Single-CF Diode	144
7.4	Dynamics of the CF Electron Emission Boundary	146
7.5	CF Plasma Potential Distribution and Plasma Emissive Properties	147
7.5.1	Probe Measurements of the CF Plasma Potential	148
7.5.2	The Nature of the Instability of CF Emission	151
7.6	Spark Current Between Broad-Area Electrodes	154
7.6.1	Calculation of the Spark Current Rise	155
7.6.2	The Role of Cathode and Anode Flares	156
8.	Formation of New Emission Centers on the Cathode	159
8.1	Mechanisms of New EC Formation Under the Plasma	159
8.1.1	Mechanism of the Explosion of Micropoints	161
8.1.2	Mechanism of the Explosion of the Liquid Neck	163

8.1.3	Mechanism of the Breakdown of Non-metallic Inclusions	165
8.2	New EC Formation and Operation Under Cathode Plasma	166
8.2.1	Experiments Without Application of a Magnetic Field	166
8.2.2	Effect of Transverse Magnetic Field on New EC Formation	169
8.2.3	Results and Discussion	172
8.3	"Screening" Effect and Electron Beam Structure in a Diode	175
8.3.1	"Screening" Effect	175
8.3.2	Influence of Neighbouring CFs on the Electron Beam Structure in the Diode . . .	178
9.	Anode Processes in the Spark Stage of Vacuum Breakdown	181
9.1	Anode Heat Conditions	181
9.1.1	Power Density Deposited at the Anode	181
9.1.2	The Anode Temperature	183
9.2	Surface Structure of the Anode in the Discharge Zone . .	186
9.2.1	Summary of Previous Work	186
9.2.2	Metallographic Studies	187
9.2.3	Electron-Microscopic Studies	190
9.2.4	Mechanisms of the Anode Surface Damage	191
9.3	Formation of Anode Flares	192
9.3.1	Conditions for AF Formation, Its Composition and Temperature	192
9.3.2	The Expansion Velocity of AF	195
9.4	X-Radiation Generated at the Anode	198
9.4.1	X-Radiation on Discharging a Line	199
9.4.2	X-Radiation on Discharging a Capacitor	200
10.	Fast Processes at DC Breakdown of Vacuum Gaps	203
10.1	Electrical Study of DC Breakdown	204
10.1.1	Electric Circuit	204
10.1.2	Prebreakdown Current and Breakdown Voltage .	205
10.1.3	The Current Rise Time at Breakdown	207
10.1.4	X-Radiation and Electrode Erosion at Breakdown	210
10.2	Optical Studies	210
10.2.1	Determination of the Time of Appearance of Light	210
10.2.2	Electro-optical Breakdown Studies	211
10.3	Comparison with Results of Other Investigations	212
10.4	EEE Initiation at DC Breakdown	219

10.4.1	EEE Initiation under Pure Conditions	219
10.4.2	EEE Initiation and the Total Voltage Effect . . .	221
10.4.3	Criteria for Vacuum Breakdown and EEE Initiation	225
11.	Nonstationary Processes	
	in the Vacuum Arc Cathode Spot	227
11.1	The Motion of Vacuum Arc Cathode Spots	227
11.1.1	The Effect of Surface Condition	227
11.1.2	The Influence of a Magnetic Field	232
11.1.3	Spontaneous Formation of Cathode Spots in Pulsed Arc Discharges	234
11.2	Response of the Vacuum Arc to Current Transients . . .	235
11.2.1	Experimental Equipment and Technique	236
11.2.2	Results	238
11.3	Vacuum Arcs at Threshold Currents	241
11.3.1	The Threshold Current of a Vacuum Arc	241
11.3.2	Cathode Spot Current Density	244
11.4	Numerical Simulation of Processes in an Explosive Emission Center	246
11.5	Explosive Electron Emission and the Vacuum Arc Cathode Spot	252
12.	Pulsed Electrical Discharge in Vacuum at Cryogenic Electrode Temperatures	255
12.1	Field Electron Emission at Low Cathode Temperatures	255
12.1.1	Effect of Superconductivity on FEE Current . . .	255
12.1.2	The Nottingham Effect and Superconductivity .	256
12.1.3	Other Emission Effects	258
12.2	Field Emission Current Preceding the Explosion of a Point	259
12.3	Characteristics of the Vacuum Discharge at Cryogenic Temperatures	261
12.3.1	Experimental Conditions	261
12.3.2	Experimental Results	261
12.4	Vacuum Discharge Between Electrodes Made of High-Temperature Superconductors	263
12.4.1	General Notions	263
12.4.2	FEE from High-Temperature Superconducting Cathodes	264
12.4.3	Vacuum Discharge	265
	References	269
	Subject Index	291